

## Against the Grain

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Volume 23 | Issue 6

Article 9

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December 2011

# Mutual Advocacy: Developing Shared Outreach Programs with Institutional Partners

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### Recommended Citation

Stecklein, Heather J. and Wheaton, M. Nathalie (2011) "Mutual Advocacy: Developing Shared Outreach Programs with Institutional Partners," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 23: Iss. 6, Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6029>

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# Mutual Advocacy: Developing Shared Outreach Programs with Institutional Partners

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In large institutions, librarians and archivists must develop a broad slate of outreach activities to entertain, educate, and gain the loyalty of the wide variety of different users that comprise their public. While this prospect may seem daunting, information professionals are far from alone. Departments in large institutions create plentiful opportunities for librarians and archivists to engage in institutional outreach partnerships.

## About the Rush University Medical Center Archives

The **Rush University Medical Center Archives**, a section of the Library of **Rush University** in Chicago, has capitalized on existing outreach initiatives within the institution to bring information about its collections to a broader user base. The current Archives permanent staff consists of two professional, full-time archivists, **Heather Stecklein** and **Nathalie Wheaton**. **Rush University** was established in 1972 and consists of **Rush Medical College** (its oldest component, founded in 1837), the **College of Nursing**, the **College of Health Sciences**, and the **Graduate College**. It is a small private university with a student body of about 1,600 students. The hospital aspect of the medical center was created from two predecessor institutions, each founded in the 19th century. **Rush** employs about 8,000 people.

The **Rush** Archives holds mostly institutional and departmental records, but it also includes some personal papers of physicians, nurses, faculty, and alumni. It contains approximately 3,000 linear feet of documents along with photographs, audiovisual items, paintings, artifacts, and born-digital materials.

Since **Rush University** lacks liberal arts and social science programs, **Rush** does not have a ready-made population of students and faculty who research archival materials for publications and class projects. This reality, combined with the relative physical isolation of the Archives from the main footprint of campus, causes major challenges for the Archives to connect its collections to potential institutional users.

The archivists at **Rush** have initiated a major outreach program during the past five years, and a large component of its success is its utilization of existing initiatives to promote archival collections. We have partnered with the outreach activities of other campus departments in three major ways: we contribute to existing campus initiatives as presenters, we create our own contributions to existing events, and we engage ourselves as participants in a variety of activities organized by other departments.

## Contributions to Campus Publications

Our most regular outreach activities involve writing articles for the official social media initiatives and newsletters of **Rush University Medical Center**. Our institution recently created official blogs, **Facebook** pages, and **Twitter** feeds that are administered by **Rush's** Department of Marketing and Communications. Like all other departments on campus, we must submit items to Marketing for posting. They provide great feedback and editing for our pieces and judiciously intermingle our content with content from other departments.

The **Rush InPerson** blog is designed to reflect the personal stories of individuals involved with our institution. The blog's mission statement affirms that it is "a forum for doctors, nurses, professors, students, and patients to share their experiences about life at **Rush University Medical Center** in Chicago." The **Rush** Archives contributes articles on topics of our choice, including biographical sketches of historic **Rush** figures, answers to frequently asked questions, and announcements about our events and digital initiatives. Each month, we contribute a Photo of the Month to the blog, which spotlights a photograph from our collections and includes information about the people, facilities, or events pictured. Blog posts from the **Rush** Archives are among the most successful pieces in the blog, and they consistently rank among the twenty most-viewed posts each month. **Rush's** Marketing Department further promotes our blog posts through the institution's **Facebook** pages and **Twitter** feeds. The **Rush Facebook** page is especially popular among employees and patients, and it provides us with the opportunity to immediately respond to questions and comments about our submissions.

Newsletters comprise another component of the **Rush** Archives outreach initiative. We are regular contributors to the **Rush** Library's quarterly newsletter, *InfoLine*. We use this publication as an opportunity to feature a column called "Ask the Archivist," which welcomes questions submitted by readers. We publish our answers to these inquiries and award selected question contributors with a high-quality reprint of an image from our photograph collection. We also act as guest contributors to departmental and group newsletters. For instance, our **Nursing Alumni Association** publishes a quarterly newsletter called *News and Views*. We provide features to this newsletter about our nursing related collections and requests for donations of materials from alumni and former staff.

## Committee Participation

We participate in committees on campus to expose the Archives to a broader range of employees and increase our visibility to administrators. We have assisted with campus accreditation, designing public spaces in the new hospital building, and organizing a groundbreaking celebration on campus. Our committee participation underscores our commitment to assist with the institution's mission beyond the specialized activities of our department.

Currently, the Archives is active on a committee to promote the fortieth anniversary of **Rush University**. The committee consists of staff from departments including Student Affairs, Philanthropy, Marketing and Communications, and the College of Health Sciences. Working from the committee's guidelines and with the help of an outside design firm, we created wraps for every elevator door in **Rush University's** ten-story main building. These wraps display important milestones in **Rush University's** forty-year history and the medical center's overall 175-year history, with different time periods represented on each floor. We also contributed to a similar committee that created large posters for display in prominent hallways of the university. **Rush University** regulates the type of items that students and staff may place on facility walls, and the university developed this series of posters to provide a more interesting, professional addition to the halls of its main academic building. The **Rush** Archives regularly contributes new posters to this series, and the campus cycles the posters to new locations throughout the year.

## Informational Tables at Campus Events

We have also pursued opportunities to participate in group and departmental events. The Archives has staffed informational tables at a variety of campus events and celebrations. When the Human Resources Department organized an event spotlighting innovations by departments on campus, we presented a display documenting historical advances accomplished by faculty and staff members of the institution over time. We further utilized this booth to distribute information about our own innovative new digital collections. Similarly, we participated in a career fair at **Rush** for the Winnetka Junior Auxiliary of the **Rush** Woman's Board. Our table incorporated a display featuring items and photographs from the Archives, and we spoke with the high school age members about the archival profession. During this event, we took the opportunity to visit the tables of other presenting departments and discuss the collections and services

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of the **Rush** Archives. Many of the employees staffing the tables at the event were previously unfamiliar with our department.

Our most successful informational table took place during the groundbreaking celebration for a new building on campus. **Rush** invited all of its faculty and staff members to attend the celebration during their breaks. The event took place at a park near campus and included prize giveaways, free food, and informational tables about the new construction project and new programs throughout the institution. The **Rush** Archives booth featured a display with documents, artifacts, and uniforms from our collections. We spent an entire day at the table answering questions from curious employees, and we estimate that we made over 500 contacts that day.

### Presentations about Collections

The Archives has also offered presentations connected to larger campus events and lecture series. We contributed to the regular Grand Rounds series of the Otolaryngology Department with a lecture detailing information about artifacts we hold in a collection in the Archives. Between 1890 and 1920, an otolaryngologist serving as a faculty member of **Rush Medical College** preserved the items that he removed from children during surgical procedures. Our presentation used artifacts in this collection to illustrate the details of individual case histories and their surgical resolutions. Following the presentation, delighted physicians swarmed the podium to view the objects.

We also arranged to participate in a slate of events including a series of presentations on campus about women in medicine. In 2010, the Director of the Library of **Rush University** arranged for the institution to host a traveling exhibit from the **National Library of Medicine** about female physicians: "Changing the Face of Medicine." The Archives took this opportunity to offer presentations about the history of female practitioners at **Rush**. **Nathalie Wheaton's** lecture focused on women graduates and physicians at **Rush**, and **Heather Stecklein's** detailed the advancements of nursing education at **Rush's** predecessor schools between 1900 and 1920.

### Attending Events as General Participants

We have learned the great value of participating in campus events where we are not part of the organizing team. Each month, we review the upcoming events on campus, and we attend a selection of presentations, classes, and celebrations from a diverse range of departments and groups. We recognize the significant amount of planning that goes into organizing events, so we reciprocate by supporting the initiatives of other faculty and staff members. A fantastic consequence of our attendance is that the events bring us to many individuals that we rarely encounter or have never met. Most institutions host a solid range of these activities, and most are free to attend and take place during ordinary working hours. On our campus, events include cultural celebrations, retirement parties, ribbon cuttings, and informational presentations. They

also include more formal activities like the administration's Town Hall meetings, continuing education classes, and Marketing and Communications' First Friday Web Forum. **Rush's** Marketing and Communications Department hosts a monthly First Friday Web Forum that

allows them to discuss and introduce **Rush** Web initiatives and other marketing projects to the larger **Rush** community. **Rush** Archivist **Nathalie Wheaton** attended one such session, and all of the attendees introduced themselves.

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## against the grain people profile

### M. Nathalie Wheaton

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**BORN AND LIVED:** Atlanta, GA; Chapel Hill, NC; Chicago, IL.

**EARLY LIFE:** I was born and raised in Atlanta, GA, and majored in Anthropology at the **University of Georgia** at Athens. After graduation, I worked at a cultural resources firm, **New South Associates**, in Stone Mountain, GA. I analyzed and curated prehistoric and historic artifacts in the archaeology lab for four years and performed archaeological field surveys throughout the Southeast. I worked in the graphics department preparing reports and graphic elements for a year. I realized all of the tasks I enjoyed in these positions corresponded well to archives, particularly organizing and describing items, collections, and reports. I decided to pursue a master's degree in library science.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** I earned a Master of Science in Library Science degree from the School of Information and Library Science at the **University of North Carolina** at Chapel Hill in 2006. While in graduate school, I was a research assistant at the Southern Historical Collection, part of the Manuscripts Department at **UNC-Chapel Hill's Wilson Library**. I processed collections ranging from antebellum correspondence to the papers of modern Southern writers and wrote EAD finding aids. I moved to Chicago, IL, and became assistant archivist at **Rush University Medical Center Archives**, a position I have held since 2006. I serve as Web Moderator for the **Chicago Area Medical Archivists** and created and maintain the **CAMA** blog.

**FAMILY:** I married fellow archivist and SILS graduate **Benn Joseph** in 2007. He is currently Manuscript Librarian at **Northwestern University's** Special Collections and Archives. We welcomed our first child, **Sophie Carolina Joseph**, in February 2010.

**IN MY SPARE TIME:** I have been dancing and singing for many years and continue to perform every chance I get.

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** I enjoy reading books on the history of anything, such as the alphabet, *Alpha Beta* by **John Man**, or chess, *Master Pieces* by **Gareth Williams**.

**PET PEEVES:** More and more people are using their cell phones to type professional emails, and, unfortunately, it often results in poor grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

**PHILOSOPHY:** My father taught me, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing poorly." You have to try, even if it means making mistakes. Learning from mistakes is the only way you'll end up accomplishing anything worthwhile.

**MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** I very much enjoyed presenting "Getting There is Half the Fun: Implementing Big Changes in Small Archives" as part of a session titled "Where is Everyone? Staying Current with a Small Staff" at the **Society of American Archivists** annual conference in Austin, TX, 2009.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Become a master of light processing!

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** For many researchers, if archival material isn't digitized and available online, it might as well not exist. Archives will have to prioritize large-scale digitization of historic collections without sacrificing processing standards. 🐼



## Mutual Advocacy ... from page 38

The fifteen **Rush** employees present represented a wide range of departments and surprised **Nathalie** when they used their own introduction opportunities to ask her questions about the **Rush** Archives. One woman thanked her for assistance the Archives provided her with a genealogy request several months before. She recalled the emotional response her relative gave her when she presented him with reprinted material from the **Rush** Archives' collection. Another attendee asked if a collection in his own department would be suitable for donation to the Archives. In this group setting, all of the participants heard the conversation between the Archivist and other employees. Consequently, everyone present learned about the variety of ways they could make use of our research skills and collection initiatives.

These fruitful encounters with other employees are not possible if we don't venture out of our office. Each campus event provides opportunities to interact with different segments of the institutional community. In many cases, it is the first time some of our fellow participants have heard about the Archives. We rarely leave one of these events without a fresh reference request, an offer of materials to transfer to the Archives, or a request for information about our outreach events and tours.

### Creating our Own Contributions to Existing Events

Finally, the **Rush** Archives has created its own contributions to existing campus events. In several instances, we have made note of new ways that our department can enhance existing annual events. Each year, **Rush University Medical Center** encourages its employees to participate in the **American Heart Association's** Heart Walk. The major city-wide event takes place in Chicago's Grant Park, but many employees do not have schedules that allow them to travel to that location. Instead, the institution's Heart Walk committee created an on-campus alternative walking route. When the **Rush** Archives recognized that this event was taking place on campus each year, we proposed that the **Rush** Archives could incorporate a historic walking tour of campus into the route. In response, event organizers modified the route to represent a walking tour that incorporated many of the older buildings on campus. Now, on-campus walkers learn about the history of **Rush** as they raise money for charity each year.

## Rumors from page 34

ites **Rod Gauvin** is Senior Vice President and General Manager of **ProQuest Information Solutions**, responsible for all library markets. **Tim Wahlberg**, Senior Vice President and General Manager of **ProQuest Corporate Market Solutions** leads the corporate market business, including **ProQuest Dialog**. **Michael Gersch** continues in his role as Senior Vice

President and General Manager of **Serials Solutions** while now also overseeing **ProQuest's** affiliated business, **Bowker**. **Rich LaFauci**, Senior Vice President and General Manager of **ProQuest Research Solutions**, leads the consumer business as well as product brands **RefWorks** and the recently launched **Pivot** for research development professionals. The awesome **Kevin Sayar**, is President and General Manager of **ebRARY**, and the resourceful **Boe Horton**, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of **ProQuest East Asia**, continues his

focus on developing products and services for customers in that region. Whew! Hard keeping up with all the innovations at **ProQuest!** <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/aboutus/press-room/11/20111109.shtml>

**Listen up!!! The 2009 Charleston Conference Proceedings are FINALLY OUT!!!! 2009 Charleston Conference Proceedings, Electronic Copy (PDF, 27.9 MB) in Dropbox: <http://db.tt/yBvmrZb7>.** Print copies are available for purchase at the following retailers

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# against the grain people profile

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**BORN AND LIVED:** I was born and raised in Iowa. The most exotic place I have lived is Juneau, Alaska, and I have lived in Chicago, Illinois for eight years.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** I have been a Librarian/Archivist at the **Rush University Medical Center** Archives in Chicago for six years. Before I came to **Rush**, I was an Archival Assistant at the American College of Surgeons, The Iowa Women's Archives, the Center for Dubuque History, and the Illinois Regional Archives Depository.

I serve on the Steering Committee of the Chicago Area Archivists, and I'm a member of the Chicago Area Medical Archivists.

**FAMILY:** I'm celebrating my fifteenth anniversary with my husband, **Geoff Osterhaus**, this year. Our daughter, **Amelia**, turned two in December 2011.

**IN MY SPARE TIME:** I love to get outside whenever I can. I enjoy hiking, geocaching, and exploring new cities. I love photographing everyday life, and I always have a camera with me.

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** I love non-fiction and biographies. I recommend *The Alex Studies*, by **Irene Pepperberg**, which details her investigative work with the speaking capability of an African gray parrot. I also recently read **Alison Arngrim's** *Confessions of a Prairie Bitch: How I Survived Nellie Oleson and Learned to Love Being Hated*, which was a fascinating memoir.

**PET PEEVES:** Defeatism and avoidable miscommunications.

**PHILOSOPHY:** There is always a way to move forward.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** The industry has to continue to build a digital presence. Our users will increasingly develop the expectation that they do not need to travel to obtain the information they seek. 🐼



### Conclusion

As **Rush's** archivists, we are responsible for accessioning and processing collections, working with external researchers, assisting **Rush** departments with projects, and archiving born-digital documents. We interpret our collections by organizing our own outreach initiatives, including exhibits, presentations, and tours. However, as a small staff, it is important for us to prioritize building our image on campus. We encourage our fellow archivists and

librarians to attend other departments' events and contribute content to existing blogs and newsletters. Participate in your institution's initiatives — even when a connection to the archives or library is not immediately clear. Sometimes to see and be seen is a goal in itself. Your status as a familiar face on campus can go a long way toward achieving your department's future goals. Every time you introduce yourself to another participant at an event, you can create a potential user or donor. 🐼